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# HER 800th ANNIVERSARY

## THE WOODEN BRIDGES – A TRADEMARK

In the old days Lucerne ranked as one of the cities richest in bridges – relative to its size, of course. Typical were the three wooden footbridges, the Hofbrücke, the Spreuerbrücke (Mill Bridge) and the Kapellbrücke (Chapel Bridge) which merchants took on their way from the city. Lucerne was then, and still is, a bridgehead for transalpine communication with Italy.

Only two are still standing, the Kapellbrücke and the Spreuerbrücke. The former, probably the most photographed scene of “Lucerna” – “the City of Lights” – is the last wooden bridge of 14th-century Europe to be preserved. Its gable paintings overhead tell the tale of the exploits of Lucerne’s and the Swiss Confederation’s heroes. Its eight-sided tower was originally a watchtower, later a torture-chamber, but today serves as a social meeting place.

Down river at the Mühleplatz the Spreuerbrücke crosses the River Reuss. Its 15th-century gable panels are decorated with pictures of a baroque “danse macabre”.

## A SAUNTER THROUGH THE OLD TOWN

A stroll through the old part of the town begins at the main railway station. As the tourists on the main lake bridge position themselves to photograph the mountains and the lake with its steamers, a babel of foreign languages express one thought – “enchanting”. At Schwanenplatz the traffic to and from Gotthard Pass streams by, but on the Schweizerhof Quay with its big luxury hotels there is still a breath of calm and turn-of-the-century elegance. But parasols and the ladies of the Russian aristocracy have gone, replaced by checked-shirted Americans and groups of camera-laden Japanese.

The twin-towered Hofkirche, one of the most significant renaissance churches in Switzerland, is encircled by a churchyard with graceful Tuscan arcades, and close by is the Rothenburgerhaus, the last survivor of the city’s 16th-century wooden houses.

Down Alpenstrasse and into Löwenplatz – and you are not far from the celebrated carved rock, the Lion of Lucerne, a memorial to the Swiss Guards who fell in Paris in 1792 defending the Tuileries and the French monarchy. Close by is the Glacier Garden, nature’s memorial to the ice age with its “giant pots” and fossils. And also there, as light relief for young and old, is the mirror-maze.

In the nearby garage Koch is another curiosity, a panorama, a huge circular painting which shows the scene in



*The Spreuer bridge is the less famous of the two wooden bridges across the Reuss. Up to the 16th century people were allowed to throw refuse into the river from here.*



*No visit to Lucerne would be complete without a stroll through these picturesque lanes.*

which a French army under General Bourbaki crossed the Swiss Frontier at Les Verrières. And in passing it should be mentioned that Löwenplatz is the place for the best souvenirs.

At Museumsplatz a right turn into Hertensteinstrasse brings the stroller into the old city where the streets become crooked and narrow. Here he will see buildings in the renaissance style and discover half-hidden gothic windows in old guild houses and private homes. High above runs the old city Musegg Wall with its nine defence towers where the sightseer can walk on the ramparts and look down on the city.

On to the Weinmarkt and thence to Mühleplatz, these medieval squares of Lucerne are bustling, friendly places. Every Tuesday and Saturday there is a market under the Egg and on Rathaus Quay. At the Kornmarkt (Corn Market) can be seen the renaissance-style Rathaus (Town Hall) where the history museum houses weapons of the old Confederation armies.

Through the Furrengasse and on up the rise the stroller reaches the Peterskapelle, Lucerne's oldest church. There on the square is the Fritschibrunnen (Fritschi fountain) a reminder of the annual "fasnacht" at Shrovetide when the "Fritschivater" (leader of the celebrations) is celebrated with a long procession.

And then the Kapellbrücke, the city's landmark, returns the stroller to the modern city.

## THE DAWN OF THE HOTEL AGE

In the middle of the 18th century the world discovered the beauty of Switzerland, and Lucerne, set among the mountains, beside lake and river, became a magnet for international tourism. Travel reports and diaries described the city as the gateway to the marvel that is the Alps.

Goethe was one of the first of its famous visitors. In 1835 the lake steamship company was formed and a year later the first steamer, the *City of Lucerne*, paddled out into the lake. The new age of tourist hotels dawned. After a big fire the Hotel Schwanen (Swan Hotel) was rebuilt in 1834/36 nearer the lake, making it the first on the shore. Soon the city spread eastwards along the shoreline and up went the big hotels; the Schweizerhof, the National, and the Palace, drawing the big names of Europe to a Lucerne holiday. By 1900 the city had no less than 67 hotels and boarding houses, rising by 1912 to a record 166.

With the start of World War I and the closing of the frontiers the hotels emptied and many closed. The first flowering of Lucerne's hotel age faded. But today the hotel count is back to the figures of the turn of the century.

## INTERNATIONAL ART AND MUSIC CENTRE

The annual climax of Lucerne's cultural

life is the International Music Festival in late summer which, since its inception in 1938, has hosted leading soloists, conductors and orchestras of all nationalities at the Municipal Theatre and the Hofkirche or at open-air concerts at the Lion Monument, drawing music lovers from all over the world.

The art gallery at Bahnhofplatz displays Swiss art from the 15th to the 20th century, modern European painters and constantly changing exhibitions of national or international works. 1978 is Lucerne's 800th Jubilee Year and as one birthday present the city is receiving eight works of Picasso which will be displayed in the renovated Am-Rhyn-Haus on the River Reuss.

The Richard Wagner Museum on the Tribschen peninsular is a place of pilgrimage for a steady stream of summer visitors. As a reminder of the composer's eight productive years there between 1866 and 1872, original scores, manuscripts and first editions can be seen as well as a library and a collection of musical instruments.

One of the biggest draws to Lucerne is the Swiss House of Transport and Communications, the most visited museum in Europe. There, the Planetarium and the unique Cosmorama can also be visited. Somewhat less renowned are the Swiss Bread and Bakery Museum and the museum of Swiss folk dress with its collection of Swiss and foreign costumes.



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*Wagner's beloved Erard piano, which accompanied him all over Europe, now stands in what was once his studio in Lucerne's Wagner Museum.*